

Eight Criteria for Congo Peace

Top of the agenda of the annual heads of government summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) held in Maputo during the week of 16 August has been the faltering peace process to end the year-long and ongoing war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Just a few days before, SA Foreign Minister Dr Nkosazana Zuma-Dlamini returned from a diplomatic mission to Kisangani. On her return, she was 'still hoping that a solution will be found'. Her efforts follow President Thabo Mbeki's marathon 12-hour session on 8 August in Pretoria with the presidents of Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

Yet such energies are increasingly reminiscent of Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policies which led him to return from Munich in 1938 promising 'peace in our time'. Indeed, DRC President Laurent Kabila's premature and abrupt departure from the Maputo SADC summit is not a hopeful sign that peace is about to break out.

It is clear that a number of problems must be addressed if calm is to prevail in the Congo:

First, there is a need for the Rwandans and Ugandans to not only agree on the *entente*, but also to convince their own rebel movements to participate. This was ostensibly the purpose of Dr Zuma-Dlamini's recent mission. The Ugandans support Jean-Pierre Bemba's *Mouvement de Liberation Congolais* (MLC) and the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie* (RCD)-Kisangani faction of former RCD president Ernest Wamba dia Wamba; the Rwandans support the RCD-Goma faction of its new president Emile Ilunga. Until now, a split in the rebel ranks has effectively derailed the implementation of the comprehensive and ambitious Lusaka peace accord signed on 10 July by Uganda, Rwanda and Kabila's government along with his allies from Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola. The peace reportedly reached on 17 August by Uganda and Rwanda to end their skirmishing may be the portent of a wider agreement drawing the rebels into the process.

There were at least 50 civilian casualties after four days of heavy fighting which broke out on 14 August between troops of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) and the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF) in the rebel-held eastern DRC town of Kisangani. By 16 August Rwanda had reportedly established control of key positions, including the airport on the outskirts of the town, although Ugandan troops had launched

a fresh offensive in response. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for an immediate cessation to the conflict and expressed his concern that the Kisangani clashes would 'further complicate ongoing regional efforts for a peaceful resolution to the conflicts in the Great Lakes region'. A Rwandan government spokesman said the confrontation had in 'no way' affected the 'cordial relations' enjoyed by the two countries. 'Rwanda as a sovereign country has its own interests. Our friends are entitled to have their own interests different from ours. That does not stop us from continuing to be friends.'

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Second, related to the above, SA is going to have to learn to speak the language that all the regional actors understand. As one SA diplomat has observed, Foreign Minister Zuma-Dlamini has 'hit the ground running' in dealing with a 'gang of rogues'. The language of patient diplomacy does not, it would seem, resonate with such arch exponents of regional *realpolitik*.

Third, in spite of these difficulties, a process of national dialogue will have to be cemented involving all the main players in the Congo. A new leader will have to emerge who is agreeable to all parties. However, no one currently fits this bill; certainly not Laurent Kabila who is seen to be more of a problem than part of the current solution. Indeed, the signature of the peace agreement by Bemba's Equateur-based MLC earlier this month was apparently dependent on Kabila's removal, although these demands have been dismissed by some as 'posturing'. But as one foreign diplomat has put it, 'unlike with Kabila, this time the rebels do not have anyone in their suitcase when they arrive in Kinshasa'.

Fourth, any leadership structure will have to provide the necessary reassurances to each of the neighbouring states which have a stake in developments in the DRC.

For Rwanda and Uganda, it will have to offer stability in the border areas and the disarming and prosecution of Interahamwe Hutu and Mayi Mayi militias — an almost impossible and inevitably bloody task. Good relations will have to be maintained with Angola and Congo-Brazzaville: for the former, ensuring that Congolese territory is not used to assist Jonas Savimbi's UNITA; and for the latter, guaranteeing that no support reaches Pascal Lissouba's forces nor the rebel Kolelas movement.

Fifth, this is related to the need to provide sufficient peacekeeping or monitoring forces which may appease the insecurities of the Rwandese in particular.

However, this is likely to be expensive, and there is some doubt as to who might fund it. SA estimates put the cost of the mission (which will hopefully be paid back by the United Nations) at R1 billion, or 10% of the current SA National Defence Force budget. However, SA will, in the eyes of the international and continental diplomatic community, have to 'lead the way' in such a peacekeeping mission. This is seen to be necessary if Pretoria is to display a credible commitment to an African renaissance by dedicating a similar level of military engagement to its current diplomatic presence.

Sixth, this is also linked to the imperative to establish parallel inclusive settlements in the neighbouring countries mentioned above, without which an inclusive political process will be impossible in the Congo. This is very difficult to achieve in the short-term in Angola and, especially in Rwanda, given the unlikelihood that this generation of Tutsis will be prepared to be ruled by Hutus after the 1994 genocide.

Seventh, Western nations will have to cut the new Congolese leadership some slack, something which they failed to do with Kabila, seen from the time of his overthrow of **Mobutu Sese Seko** as little more than 'Mobutu without the leopard hat'. Kabila was always, frankly, on to a hiding to nothing. He was expected

to clamp down on those responsible for the atrocities against the Hutus in the eastern provinces (who themselves were seen to have perpetrated the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994). But when he expelled those Rwandese from his government he claimed were responsible, they instigated another series of rebellions against him which mushroomed on the fertile ground of infrastructural and government decay, the result of 35-years of Mobutuism.

Finally, the international community will also have to come to the party by ultimately providing electoral support without which a nation-wide election cannot

occur. Congo's infrastructure has declined to the point that it is non-existent in many areas. As one Congolese expert put it: 'towns that are 200km from Kinshasa are a world away'. Put another way, while it takes three days' driving to reach Lubumbashi from Johannesburg, Lubumbashi to Kinshasa, roughly the

same distance, can take two weeks in the dry season and one month in the wet. This is a country, after all, of 46 million people with an annual per capita income of just US\$110 (which ranks it joint last of 209 countries listed by the World Bank). At the same time, Congo will have to encourage foreign investor involvement once more, not through rhetoric, but through attractive conditions which include the eradication of corruption and the establishment of the rule of law.

Pointers for SA?

Given the above, it is hardly surprising that the international community expects an African solution to this problem. But in the region, the inclusion of the DRC has both highlighted policy, personal and economic differences within SADC and impeded regional consolidation. Many see SA as having gained only a 'poisoned foot' from its current diplomatic efforts. Perhaps the time is ripe to ringfence the problems and deal first with the areas in the region and in the Congo, such as Katanga province, where South Africa has the greatest interests.

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